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Education and Work, Australia

Survey data over time on current or recent study, educational attainment, and employment

Reference period May 2021

Released 9/11/2021

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Key statistics

In May 2021, of Australians aged 15-74:

- Three in five (59%) were fully engaged in work, study or both, returning to 2019 levels after a drop to 57% in May 2020.
- Over two-thirds (68%) had or were studying for a non-school qualification.
- The proportion studying for a non-school qualification was the same in May 2021 and May 2020 (12% in both years).
- 78% with a non-school qualification were employed in May 2021, compared with 56% of people without one.
- Half of all young women aged 25-34 years now hold a bachelor degree or above, compared with just over a quarter (26%) twenty years ago (May 2001).

Survey impacts and changes

Tables expanded to include people aged up to 74 years

Tables have been expanded to include people aged 15-74 years, from 15-64 years in previous releases. More information can be found in the spreadsheet called Concordance which is located in the Downloads tab.

COVID-19 restrictions

The Survey of Education and Work (SEW) was run in respect of the first two weeks of May (2 May to 15 May) as part of the Monthly Population Survey (MPS). Statistics in this release are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting Australian Government closure of the international border in 2020.

In particular, international travel restrictions and the impact on net overseas migration resulted in decreases in some key sub-populations of the survey (for example, the number of people currently studying for a non-school qualification). Care should be taken when comparing SEW 2021 data with results from previous survey years, particularly for populations that are likely to have been impacted by these restrictions.

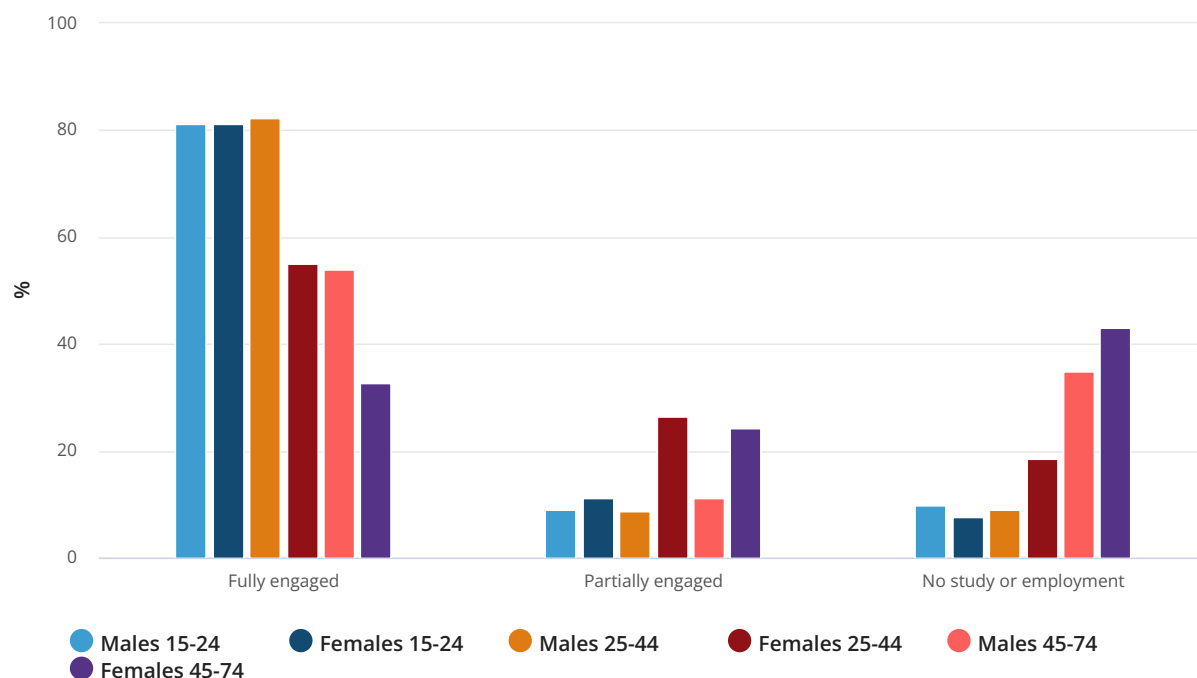
Engagement in work and/or study

In May 2021, most young Australians aged 15-24 years were doing some work or study, or a combination of both: 81% were fully engaged in work and/or study (that is, working full-time, studying full-time, or both working and studying), and a further 10% were partially engaged (part-time work or study).

Engagement in work and/or study tends to decrease as people age. Just over two thirds of people aged 25-44 years were fully engaged (69%), with 18% partially engaged, while 43% of people aged 45-74 years were fully engaged and 18% were partially engaged.

Although the bulk of the 45-74 year old cohort that was fully or partially engaged were aged under 65, almost one in three men (29%) and one in five women (19%) aged 65-74 were engaged in at least some work or study.

1: Engagement in work and/or study, by sex and age, 2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 15 and Customised data

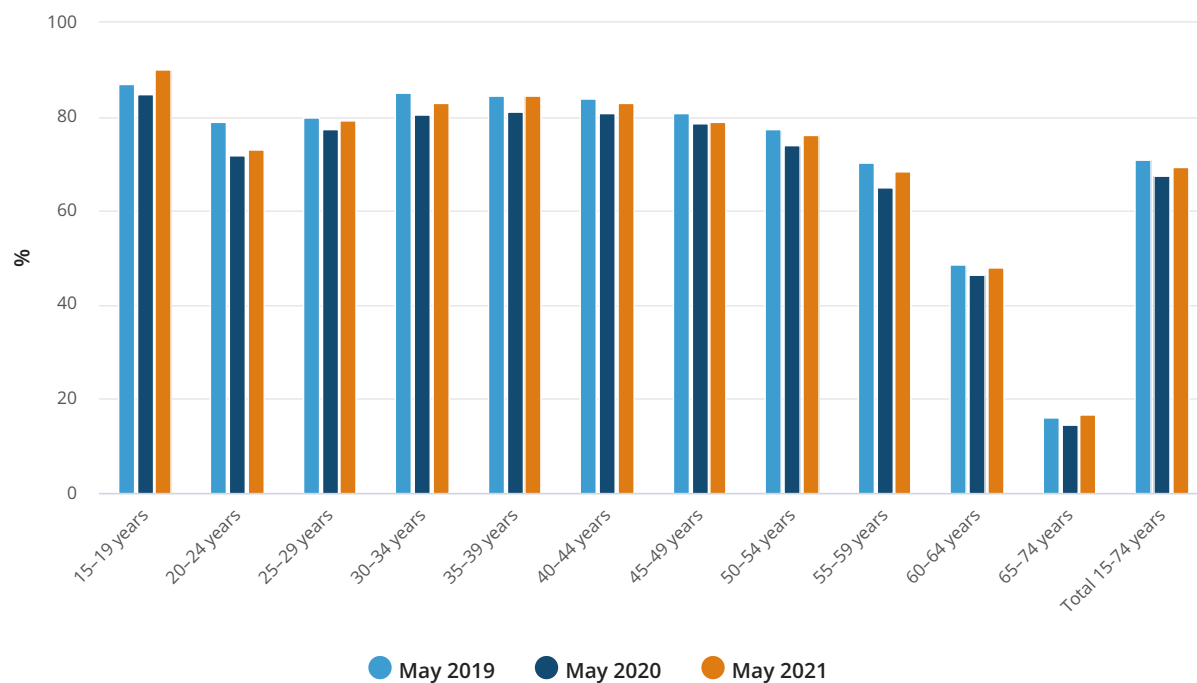
Fully engaged in work and/or study

In May 2021, there were 11.1 million Australians aged 15-74 years (59%) who were fully engaged, that is, working full-time, studying full-time, or both working and studying.

Overall, it was more common for men (69%) than women (49%) to be fully engaged, however proportions for young men and women were exactly the same: 90% each for 15-19 year olds, and 73% each for 20-24 year olds.

After a decrease in May 2020, full engagement returned to 2019 pre-COVID levels in May 2021: the proportion of all people fully engaged in work and/or study was 59% in 2019, 57% in 2020, and 59% in 2021.

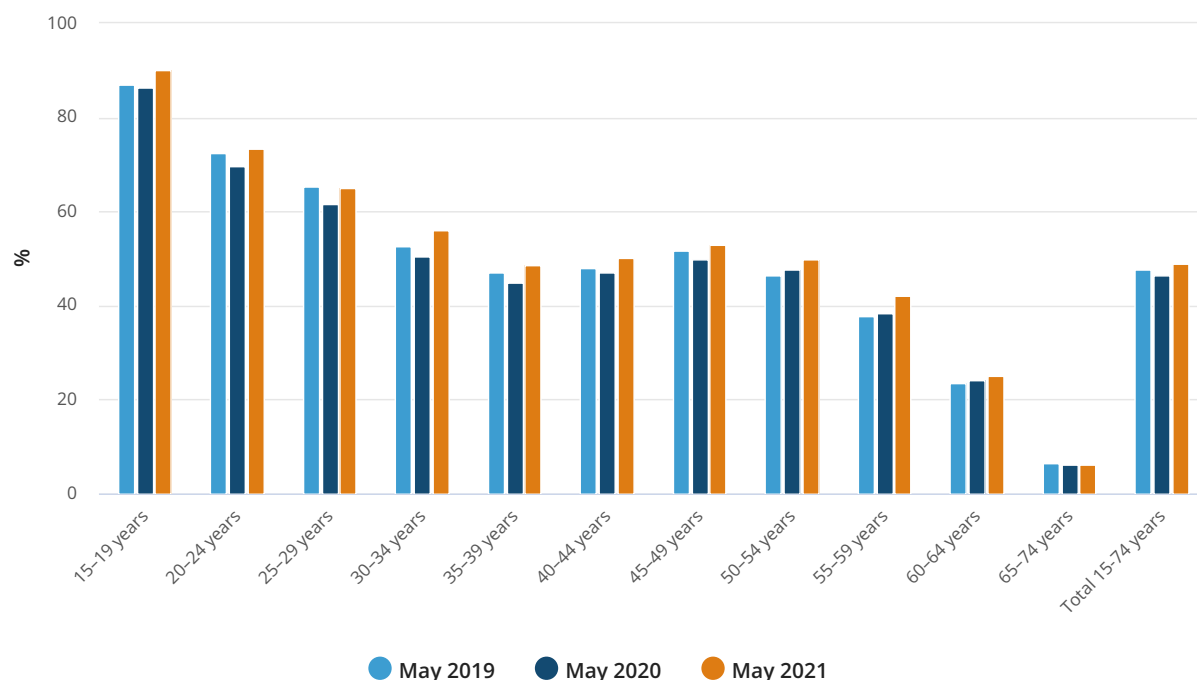
2: Males fully engaged in work and/or study, by age, 2019-2021(a)



(a) All males aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 16

3: Females fully engaged in work and/or study, by age, 2019-2021(a)

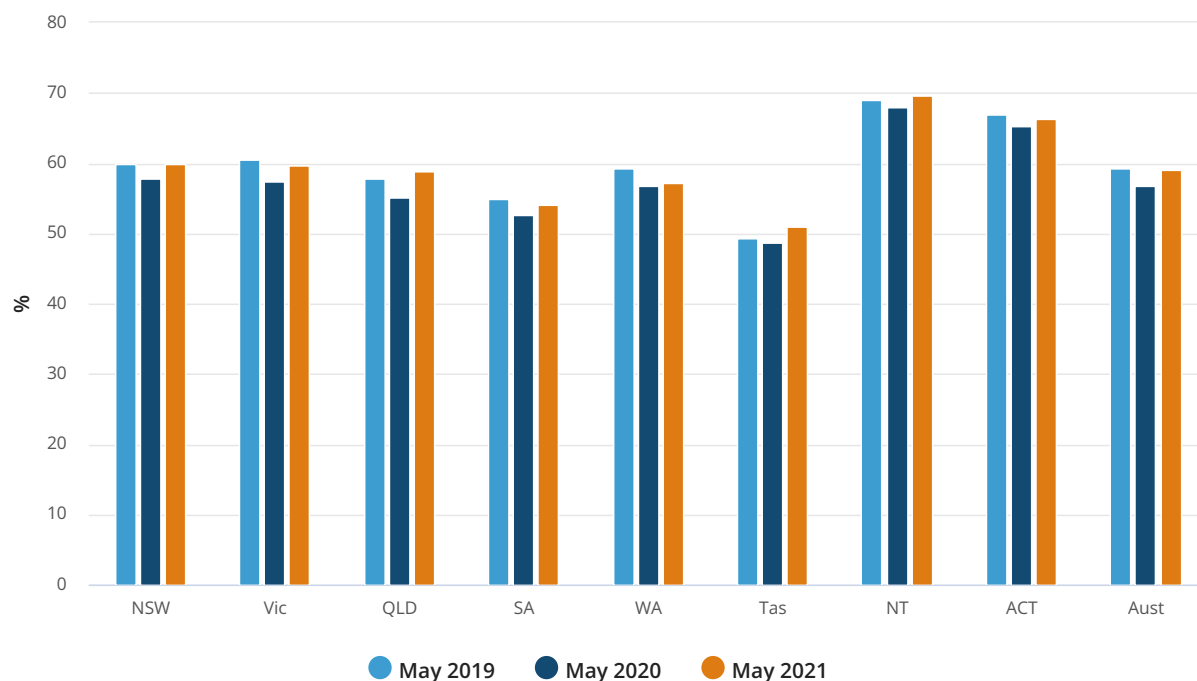


(a) All females aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 16

Across the states and territories, the change was greatest for Queensland (from 58% in 2019, to 55% in 2020, to 59% in 2021), followed by Victoria (from 61% in 2019, to 58% in 2020, to 60% in 2021). Differences across the states and territories may be partly due to different age profiles, with the NT and ACT, for example, having greater proportions of people in younger age groups than some of the other states.

4: Fully engaged in work and/or study, by state/territory, 2019-2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 16

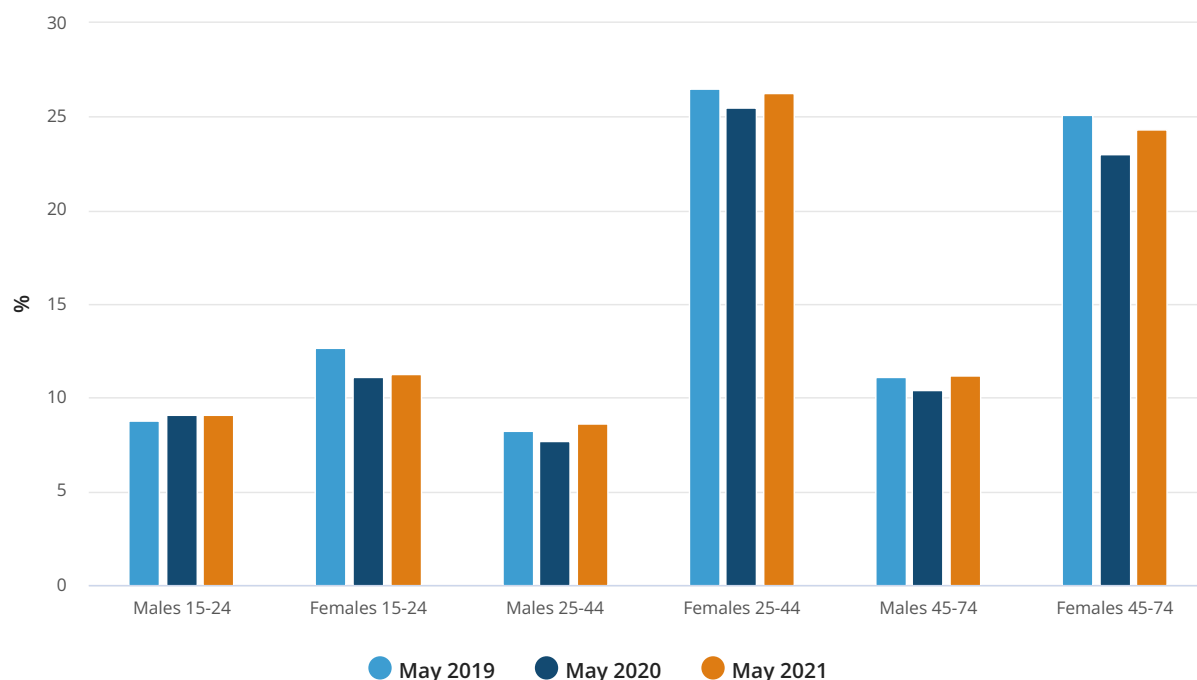
Partially engaged in work or study

Just over 9% of young men and 11% of young women aged 15-24 years were partially engaged in work or study, that is working part-time only or studying part-time only.

Older Australians were more likely to be partially engaged than younger people, and proportions differed quite markedly by sex. Many more women were partially engaged: 26% of women compared with 9% of men aged 25-44, and 24% of women compared with 11% of men aged 45-74.

While there were no significant changes in rates of partial engagement for May 2019 and May 2021, rates dropped for some groups in May 2020, when restrictions were in place across Australia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5: Partially engaged in work and/or study, by sex and age, 2019-2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

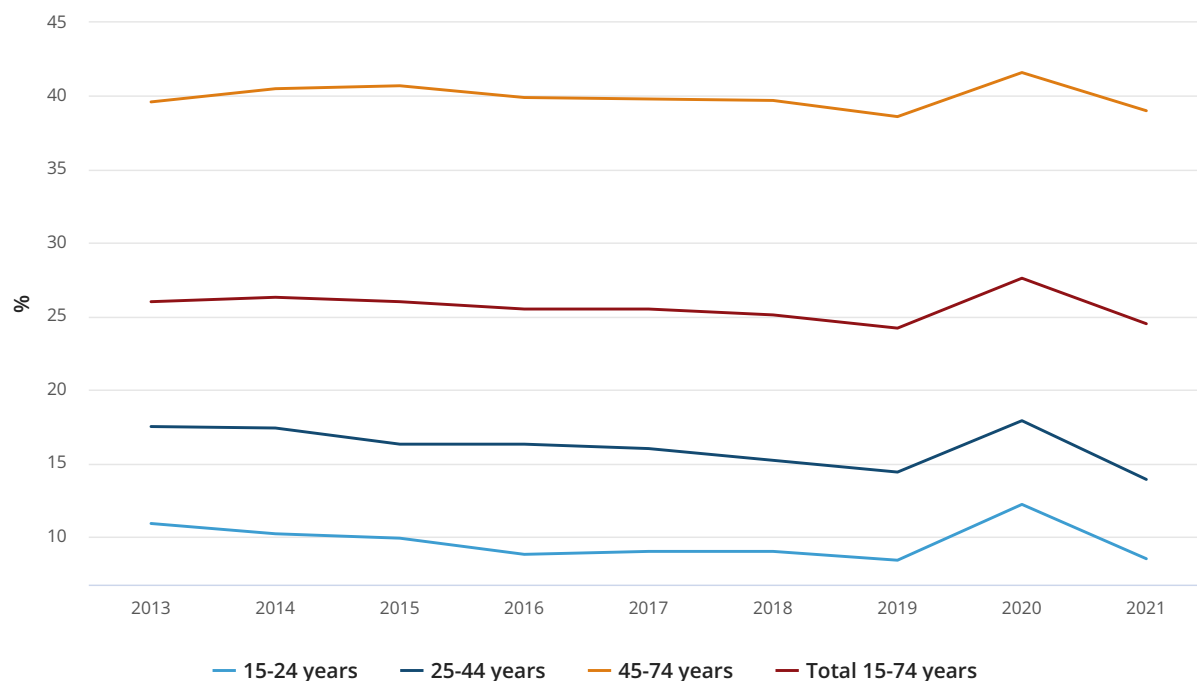
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Not engaged in work or study

Just under two in five people (39%) aged 45-74 were not doing any work or study in May 2021, compared with 42% in May 2020. For 25-44 year olds, this was 14% and 18% respectively, and for 15-24 year olds, it was 9% and 12% respectively.

However, after increasing in May 2020, overall proportions of people aged 15-74 who were not engaged in any work or study tended to return to pre-COVID levels in May 2021 (25% in 2021 compared with 28% in 2020 and 24% in 2019). Women aged 45-74 years were the most likely to be neither working nor studying in 2021 (43%).

6: Not engaged in any work or study, by sex and age, 2013-2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

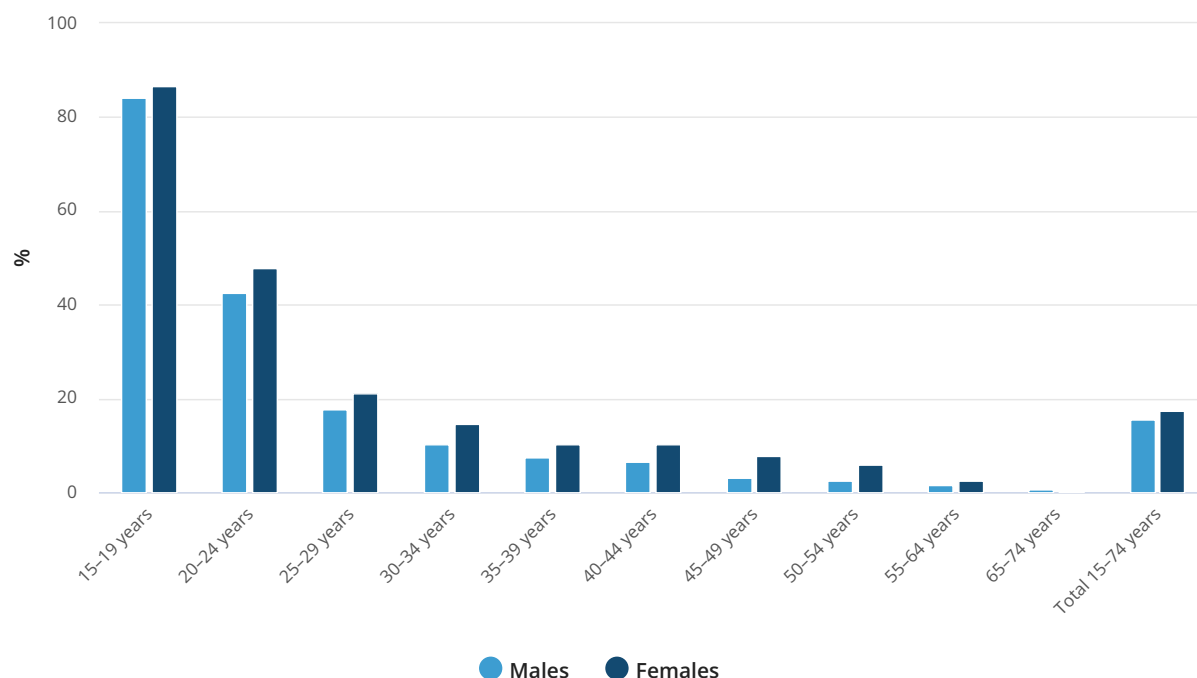
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Current and recent study

Enrolled in study

In May 2021, 16% of Australians aged 15-74 years were currently studying (15% of men and 17% of women). Around 11% and 13% respectively were studying for a non-school qualification (a certificate, diploma or degree), and the rest were at school.

7: Currently enrolled in study, by sex and age, 2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

The ACT had the highest proportion of students (18%), while WA had the lowest (15%).

Around 1.3 million people were studying at higher education institutions, while 489,000 were studying at technical and further education (TAFE) institutions, and 896,000 were at schools.

Two-thirds of current students (67%) were studying full-time.

Younger students

Most people aged 15-24 years were studying in 2021 (65% or 2 million young people, including school students). Around 1 million of them were studying for a certificate III or above.

Over half (56%) of younger students at higher education institutions (such as universities)

were female, while 62% of young vocational education and training (VET) students were male.

Around 14% of male and 13% of female school students aged 15-19 years were undertaking VET as part of their school studies.

Fewer people aged 20-24 who were not in the labour force were studying in 2021, and for those that were, fewer were studying full-time. The proportion not studying increased from 33% in 2019 to 44% in 2021, and the proportion studying full-time dropped from 62% in 2019 to 50% in 2021.

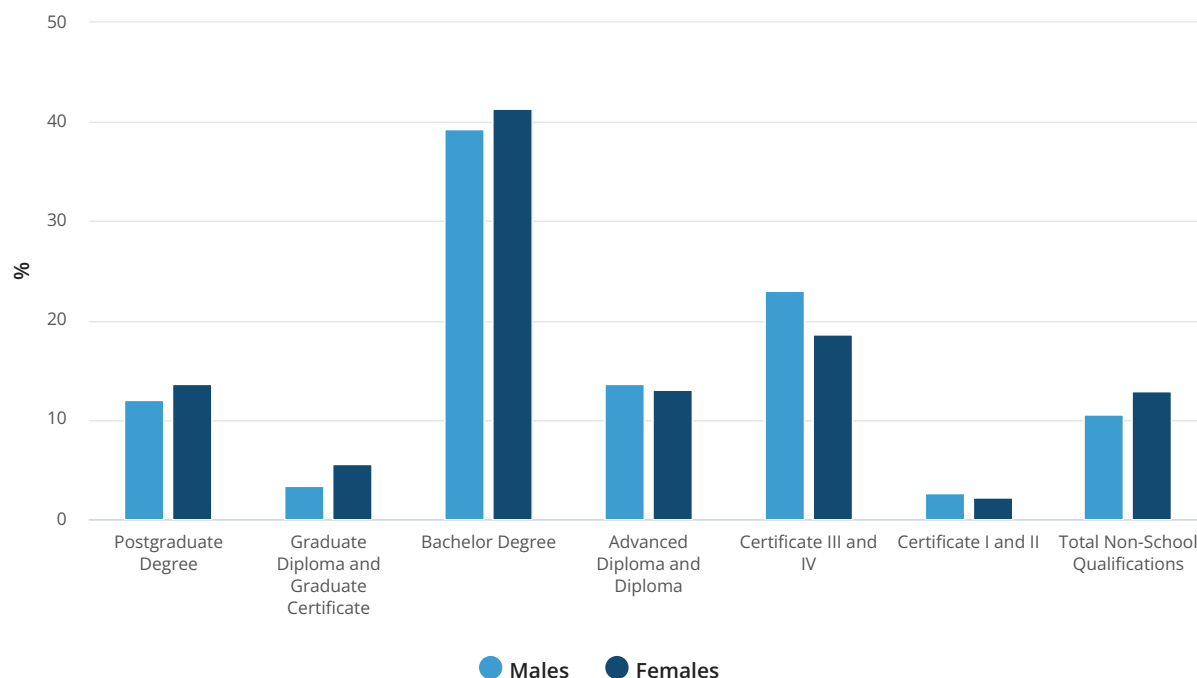
Currently studying for a non-school qualification

In 2021, 2.2 million people were studying for a non-school qualification. Proportionally, this was the same as in 2020 (12% in each year).

More than half (55%) of these students were women.

Around 40% of non-school study was for a bachelor degree, 17% was for post-graduate studies (including graduate diplomas and graduate certificates), and 38% was for a certificate, diploma or advanced diploma.

8: Currently enrolled in study for a non-school qualification, by level and sex, 2021(a)

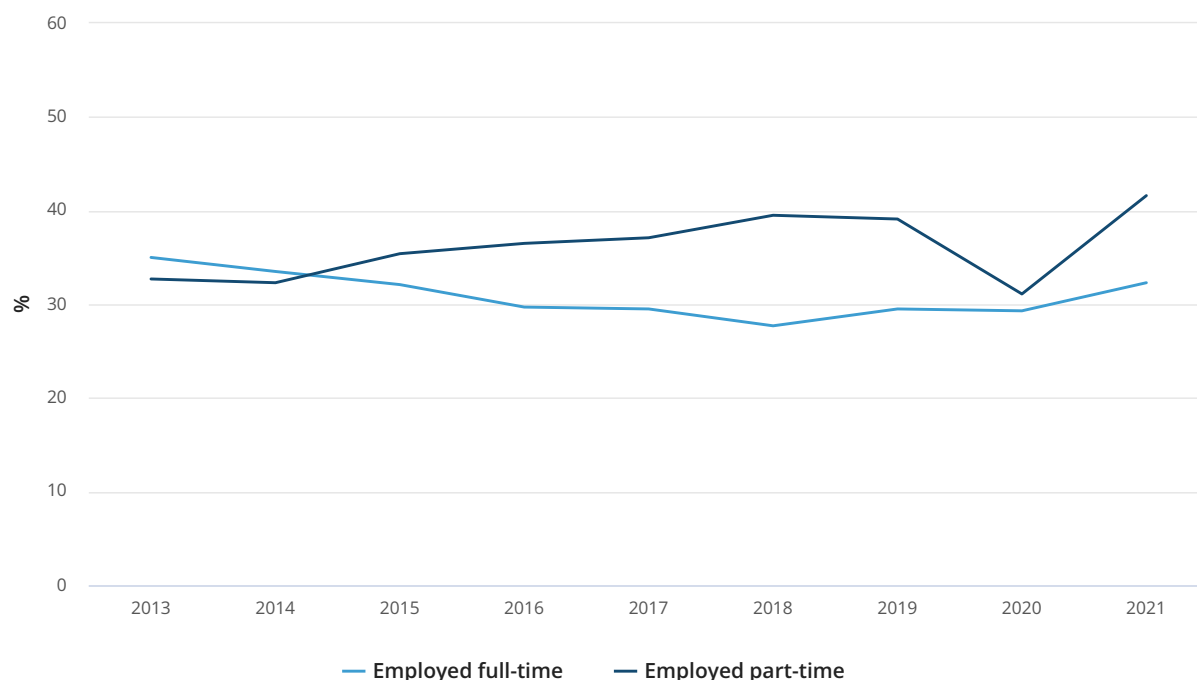


(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Almost three-quarters (74%) of people studying for a non-school qualification were also working in May 2021, compared with 60% in May 2020. 42% of students worked part-time and 32% worked full-time.

9: Employment status while studying, 2013-2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years who were currently studying for a non-school qualification.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Fields of study

The most popular fields of non-school study for women were society and culture (28%), health (23%) and management and commerce (17%). For men, these were management and commerce (20%), engineering and related technologies (20%), and society and culture (15%).

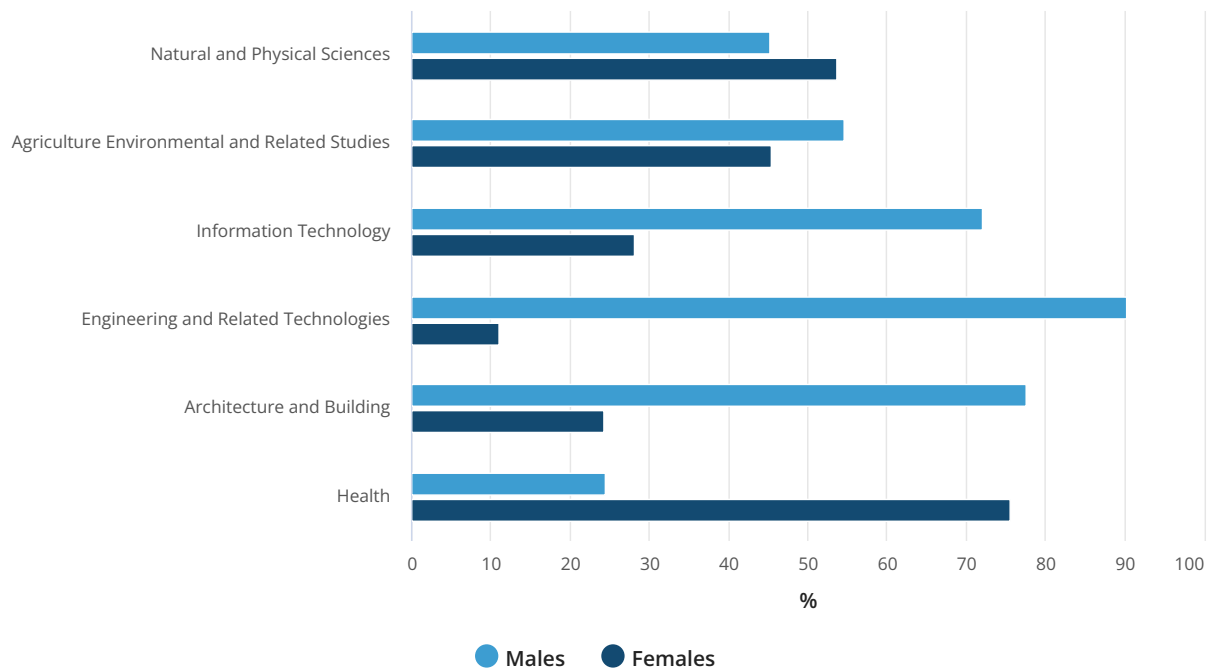
Studies in STEM

Around 462,000 people were studying for a non-school qualification in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) field, with 72% of these students being men.

A further 489,000 people were studying the STEM-related fields of architecture and building,

and health. While architecture and building students reflected the gender split of students in STEM fields (78% men), this was reversed for health students, where 76% were women.

10: Currently studying in a STEM or STEM-related field, by sex, 2021(a)(b)(c)



(a) Persons aged 15-74 currently studying for a non-school qualification in a STEM or STEM-related field.

(b) Refer to the Methodology section for more detail on STEM and STEM-related fields.

(c) Natural and Physical Sciences includes Mathematics.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Proportions of men and women across the various STEM fields have been fairly stable over the past decade.

Recent and incomplete studies

Just under 85% of people who had completed a non-school qualification in 2020 were employed in 2021, while a further 7% were looking for work.

Around 1.5 million students aged 15-74 had not completed the non-school qualification they

were enrolled in during 2020. For the most part (87%) these were people who were still studying in May 2021, however there were also 198,000 students (13%) who had deferred or dropped out of their studies; that is, they had not completed a course they were enrolled in during 2020 and they were not studying in 2021.

While the proportion of people deferring or dropping out of their studies has not significantly moved over the past fifteen years, rates had been trending down prior to 2021.

Apprentices and trainees

In May 2021, there were 191,000 people aged 15 to 74 years who were employed as apprentices or trainees. The majority were male (82%).

Around 49% (or 93,000 people) had started their apprenticeship or traineeship in the last 12 months. Most apprentices and trainees were born in Australia (87%). Just over two thirds (68%) lived in major cities, with 32% in regional or remote areas of Australia. This compares with 80% and 20% respectively of people studying for a non-school qualification.

Just over a quarter of apprentices and trainees (26%) were studying building as their main field of study, with 18% studying electrical and electronic engineering and technology.

Qualifications

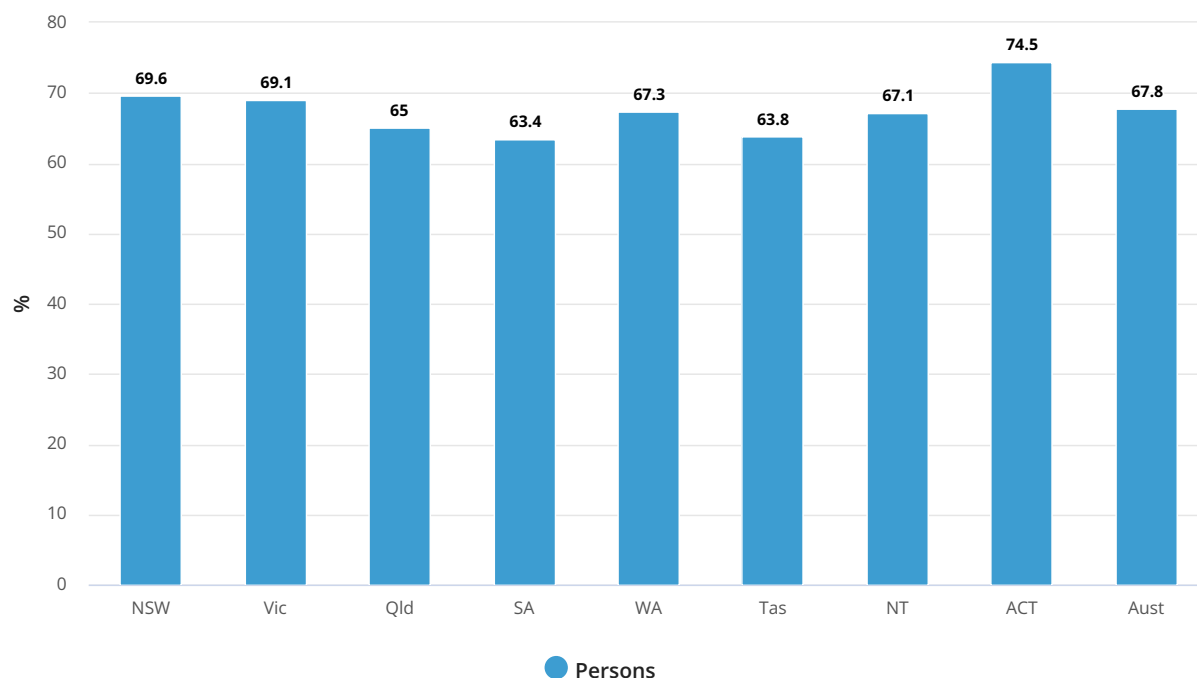
Non-school qualifications

In May 2021, 62% of Australians aged 15-74 years (11.8 million people) had a non-school qualification (a certificate, diploma or degree), while 12% were studying for one (or another one).

Overall, 68% had or were studying for a non-school qualification. This proportion has been slowly but continuously increasing over time, from 62% in 2013.

People in the ACT were most likely to have or be studying for a non-school qualification (75%), significantly higher than all other states and territories. However, at least 63% of people in all states and territories had or were studying for a non-school qualification in 2021.

11: With or studying towards a non-school qualification, by state/territory, 2021(a)



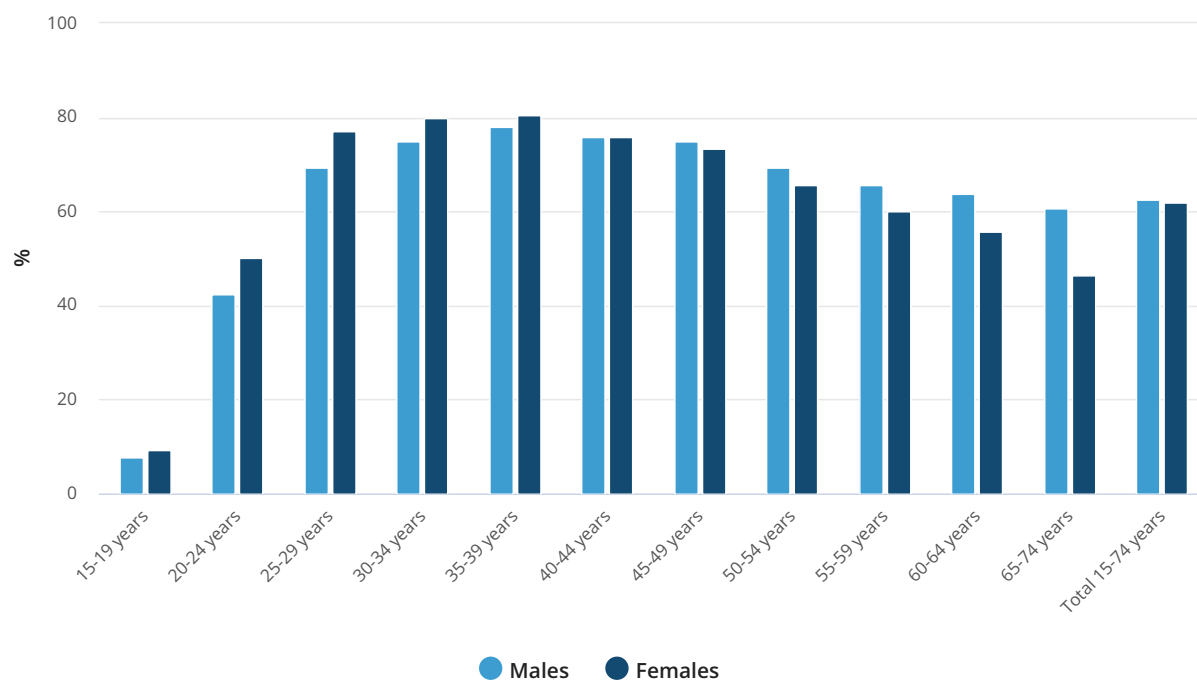
(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 27

Non-school qualifications by sex and age

More women than men in the younger age groups had non-school qualifications (31% of young women aged 15-24 compared with 26% of young men, and 79% of women aged 25-44 compared with 75% of men in this age group). This is reversing the trend that holds in the older cohorts, with more men having non-school qualifications after the age of 45 years (59% of women aged 45-74 compared with 66% of men).

12: Non-school qualifications, by sex and age, 2021(a)

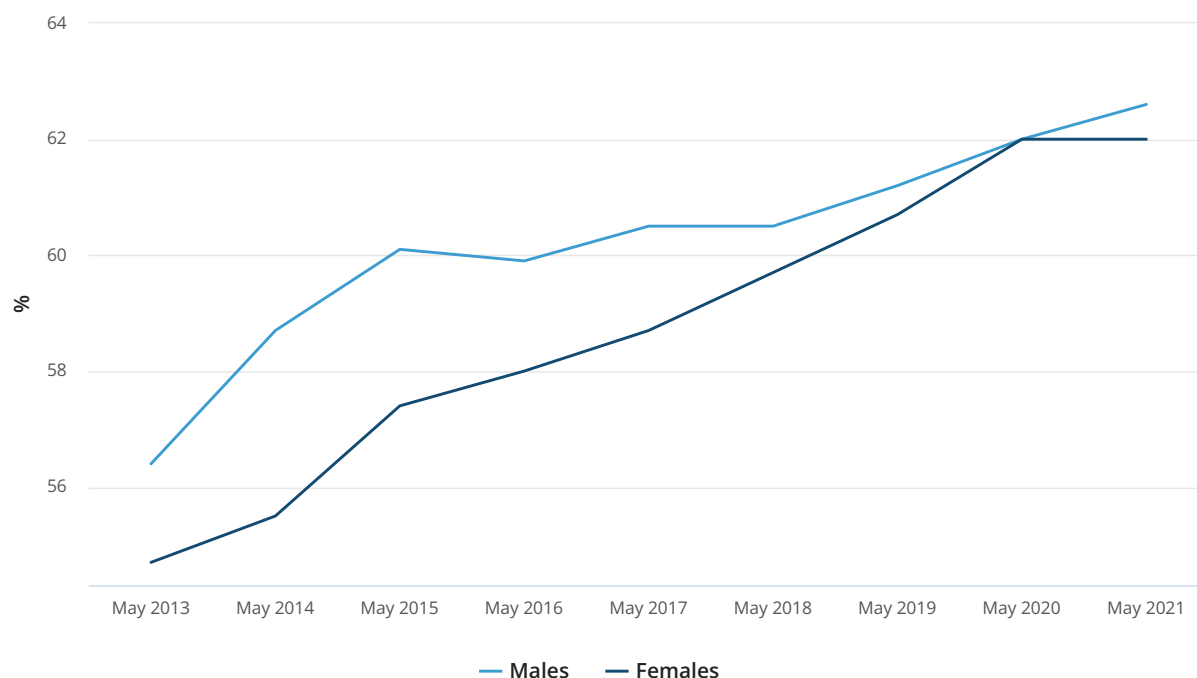


(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 25

The gap in attainment between men and women aged 15-74 years has been steadily narrowing over time.

13: Non-school qualifications, by sex, 2013-2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

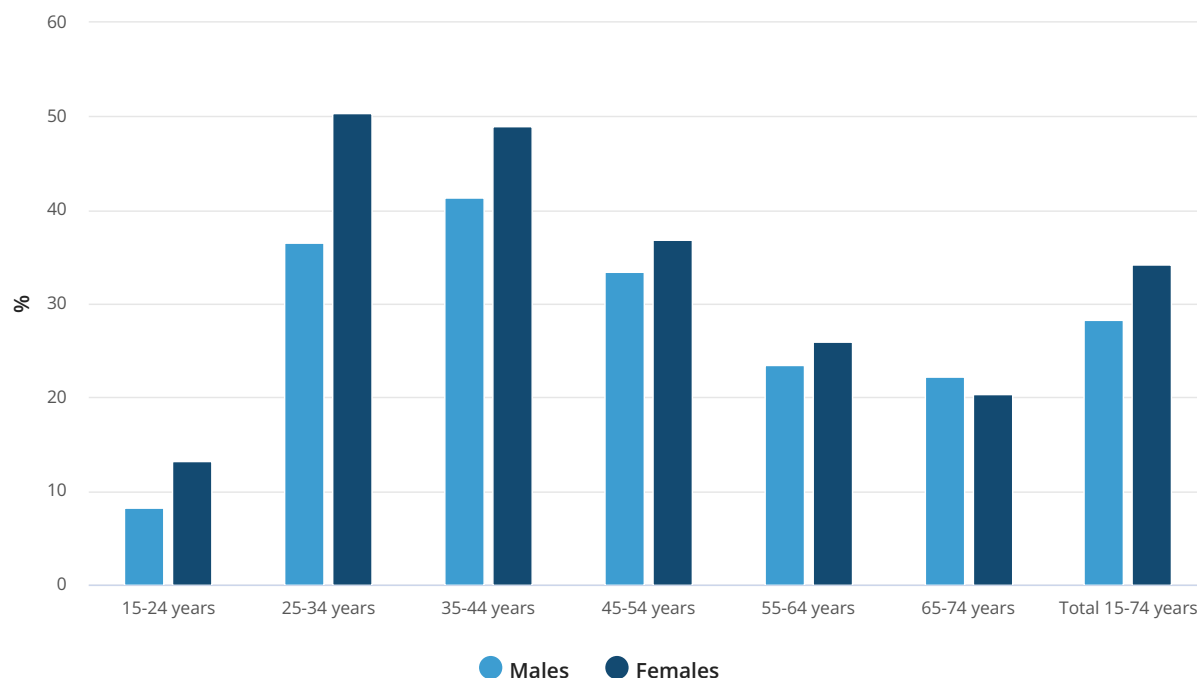
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 26

Attainment by level

Between May 2020 and May 2021, an additional 1.2% of Australians aged 15-74 attained non-school qualifications at bachelor degree level or above, bringing the national total to 31%. The ACT had the highest proportion of people with a bachelor degree or above (46%).

Aside from those aged 65 to 74 years, more women than men had a bachelor degree or above in all age groups. One in every two women aged 25-34 years (50%) had a bachelor degree or above.

14: Bachelor degree or above, by sex and age(a)



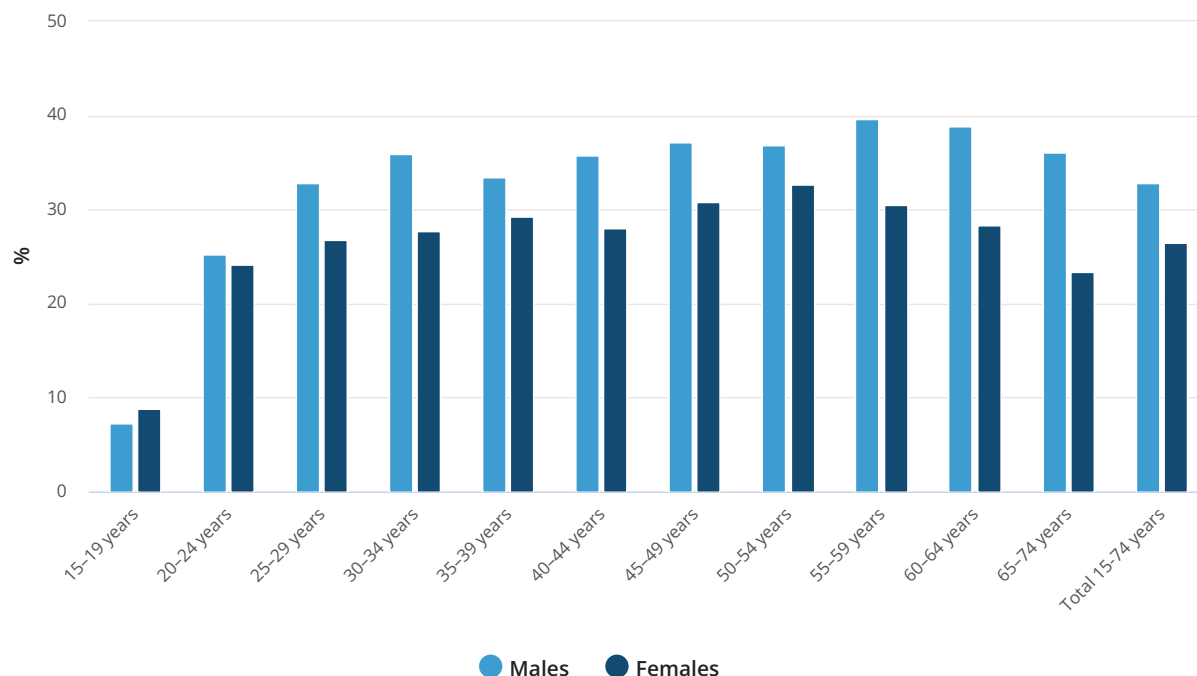
(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 35

Just under 13% of women aged 15-74 had postgraduate qualifications, compared with 11% of men.

Around 30% of Australians had qualifications below bachelor degree level (a certificate, diploma or advanced diploma) as their highest qualification. Overall, this was more likely to be the case for men (33%) than women (27%), however proportions for those under 25 years were closer together.

15: Certificate, diploma or advanced diploma, by sex and age(a)

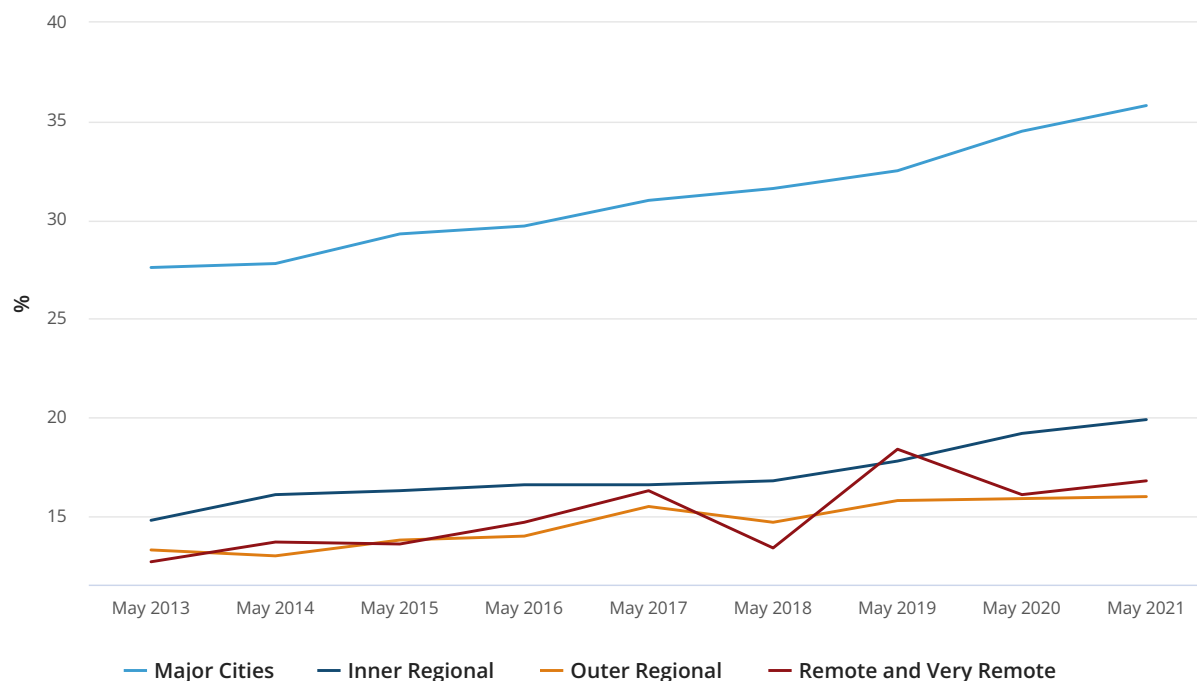


(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Levels of qualifications differ by where people live in Australia, with fewer people in regional and remote areas having a bachelor degree or above (20% for inner regional areas, 16% for outer regional areas and 17% for remote and very remote areas, compared with 36% of people in major cities). Over the last decade, however, proportions of people with a bachelor degree or above have increased across each of the remoteness categories.

16: Bachelor degree or above, by remoteness, 2013-2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years.

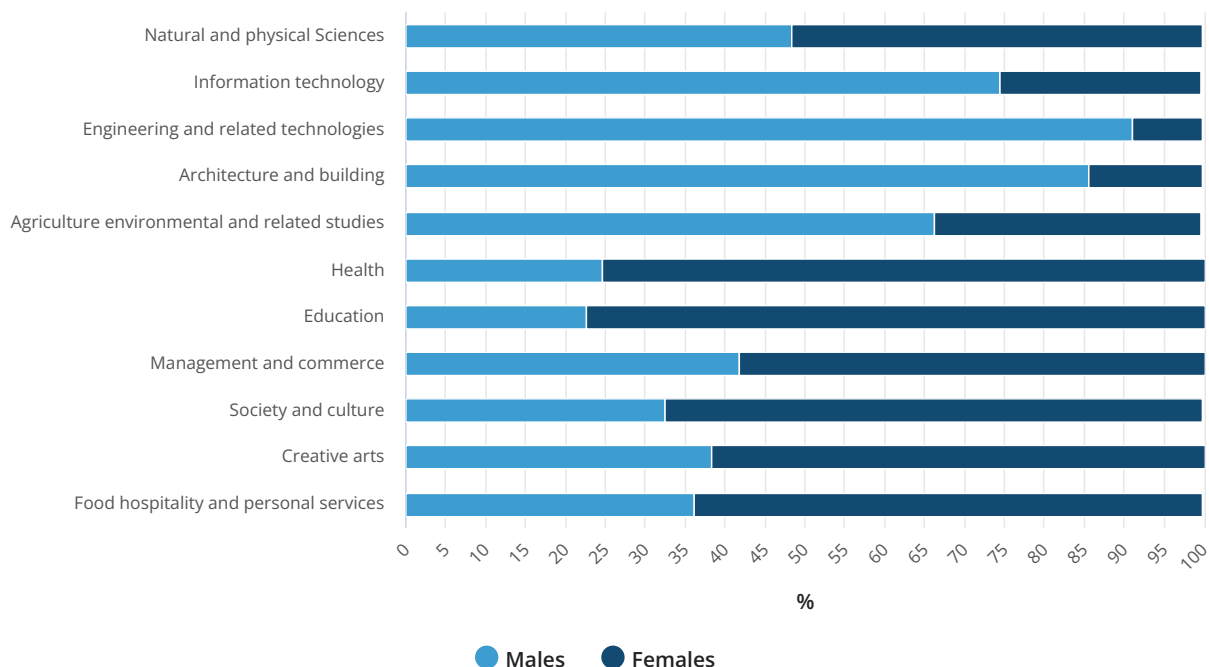
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 34

Attainment by field and sex

Men were most likely to have qualifications in engineering and related technologies (30%) or management and commerce (19%), while women were most likely to have qualifications in management and commerce (26%), society and culture (19%) or health (17%). This data was reflected in the subjects that most men and women were currently studying in May 2021.

More than 90% of people with a qualification in engineering and related technologies were men, while at least three-quarters of those with a qualification in education (78%) or health (75%) were women.

17: Field of study of highest non-school qualification, by sex(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 years with a non-school qualification.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Non-school qualifications and employment

Employment rates were higher for people with non-school qualifications: 81% of men and 75% of women aged 15-74 with a non-school qualification were employed in May 2021, compared with 61% of men and 51% of women without a non-school qualification.

People with a non-school qualification were more likely than people without one to work full-time: 69% of men and 45% of women with a qualification worked full-time, compared with 42% of men and 22% of women with no non-school qualifications.

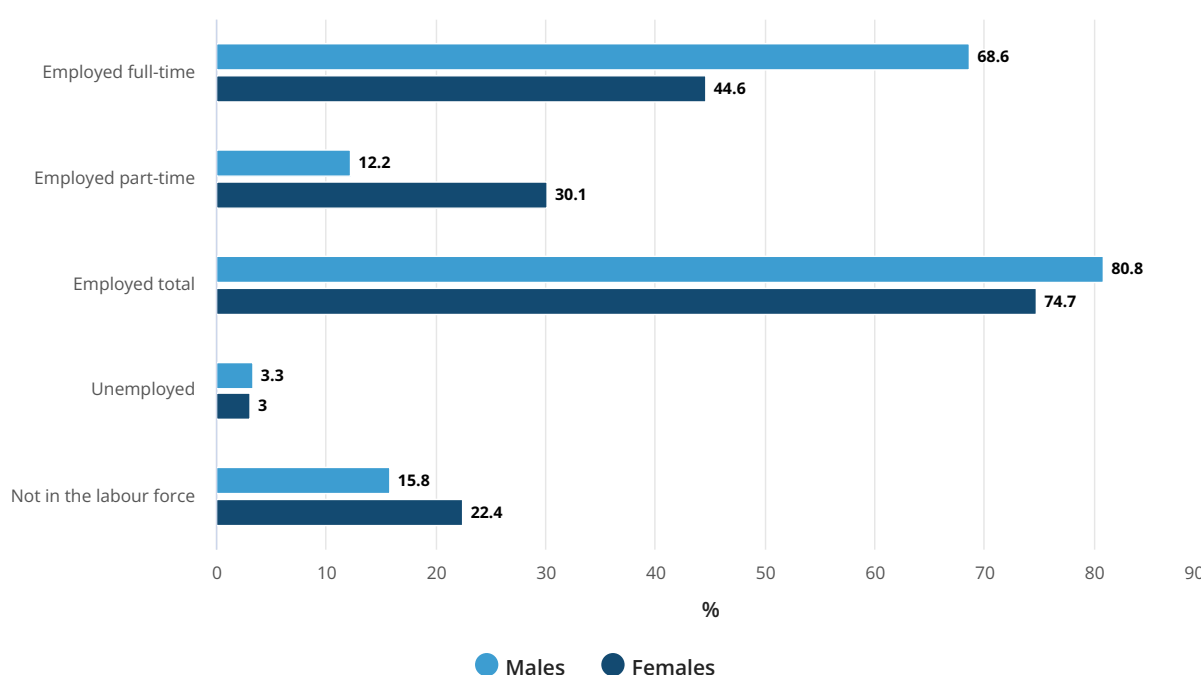
People with a non-school qualification were slightly less likely to be unemployed than those without a qualification (3% compared with 4%).

Men with a non-school qualification were the least likely to be out of the labour force: 16%

compared with 22% of women with a non-school qualification, and 34% and 46% respectively of men and women with no non-school qualifications.

Part-time work was less affected by whether someone had a qualification or not: 12% of men and 30% of women with a non-school qualification worked part-time, compared with 19% of men and 29% of women without one.

18: Labour force status of people with a non-school qualification, by sex(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 with a non-school qualification.

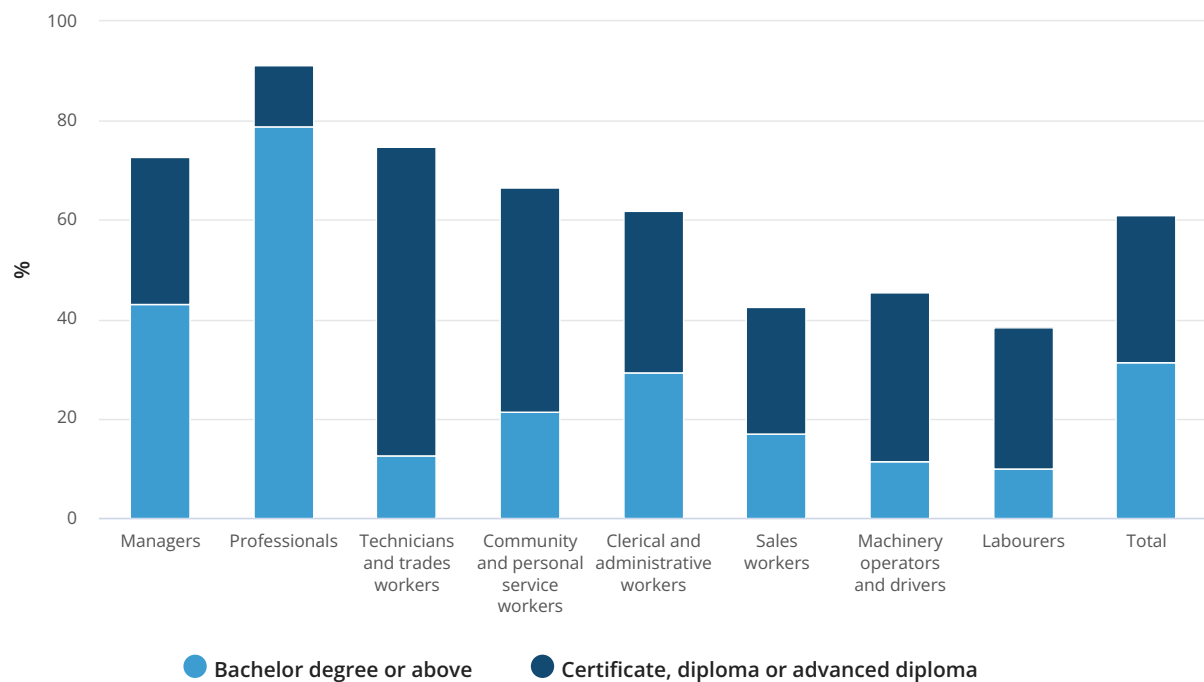
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

While a greater proportion of people with dependent children were employed overall, rates differed for those with and without qualifications, as well as differing by sex. Of those with a non-school qualification, 94% of fathers and 77% of mothers with children under 15 were employed (or 69% of mothers if a child was aged under 5). This compares with 86% of fathers and 59% of mothers with no non-school qualifications who had children aged under 15.

Non-school qualifications by occupation and skill level of job

Professionals were the most likely to have a non-school qualification (92%), and labourers were the least likely (40%).

19: Non-school qualifications, by occupation(a)

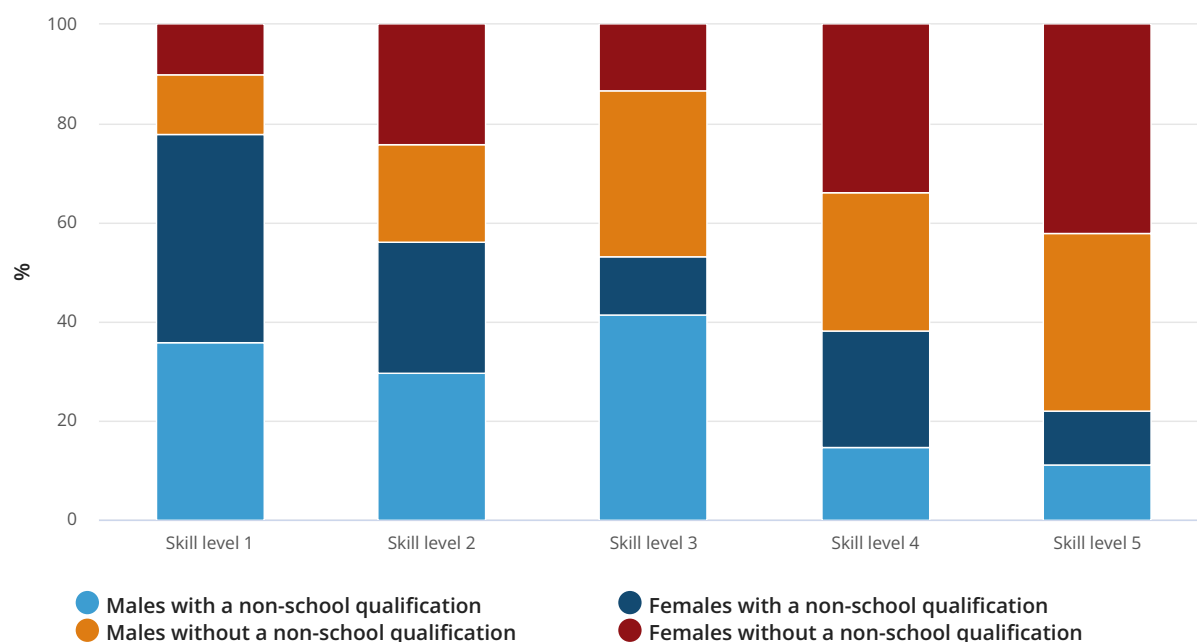


(a) Employed persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Most employed men and women with a non-school qualification (41% and 48% respectively) worked in Skill level 1 jobs (the highest skill level, including occupations such as pharmacists, architects, school principals, etc.). More men (22%) than women (6%) with a non-school qualification worked in Skill level 3 jobs (plumbers, hair dressers, butchers, etc.), while more women (26%) than men (16%) with a non-school qualification worked in Skill level 4 jobs (receptionists, delivery drivers, miners, etc.). Most men and women without a qualification worked in Skill level 4 or 5 jobs (60% and 71% respectively).

20: Employed persons with and without a non-school qualification, by skill



(a) Employed persons aged 15-74 years.

(b) Totals may not add to 100% as this graph excludes a very small number of people (<1%) for whom skill level of occupation could not be determined.

(c) For more information on skill levels, please see the Methodology.

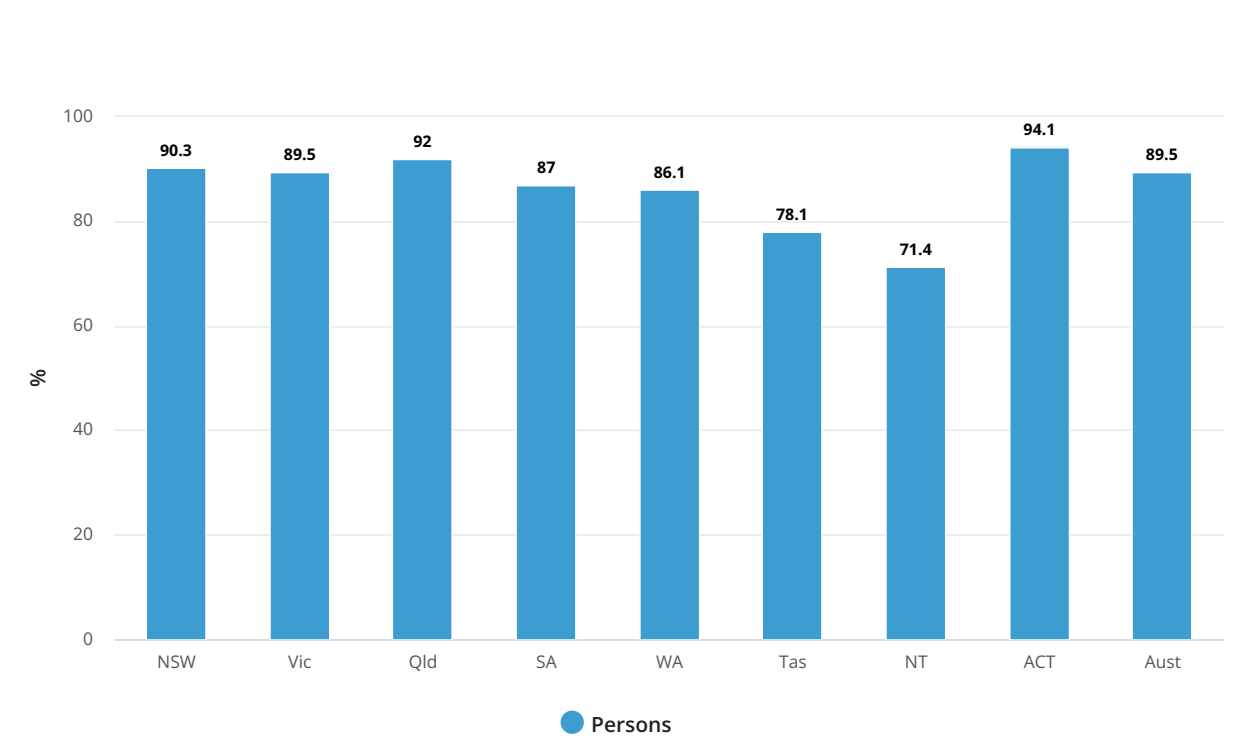
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Customised data

Attainment of people aged 20-24 with qualifications at Year 12 or certificate III level or above

In 2021, 90% of young people aged 20-24 years had attained a qualification at Year 12 or certificate III level or above. Young women were more likely to have these qualifications (92% compared with 87% of young men).

Across the states and territories, 94% of 20-24 year olds in the ACT had qualifications at Year 12 or certificate III level or above, compared with 92% for Queensland, and 90% each for New South Wales and Victoria.

21: Attainment of people aged 20-24 with qualifications at Year 12 or certificate III level or above, by state/territory, 2021(a)



(a) All persons aged 20-24 years.
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2021, Table 20

Data downloads

Education and work Download all (4.34 MB)

- 1: Current study, Tables 1-10
[Download XLSX](#)
[209.2 KB]
- 2: Current study, Table 11 (time series)
[Download XLSX](#)
[296.17 KB]
- 3: Current study at Certificate III level or above, Table 12 (time series)

[!\[\]\(2c1f3a5a6c90198e5ac625a30076203b_img.jpg\) Download XLSX](#)

[307.08 KB]

4: Recent study, Tables 13-14

[!\[\]\(7283d9faf9c88ace5d8a560ea0213e53_img.jpg\) Download XLSX](#)

[59.58 KB]

5: Engagement in employment and/or study, Table 15 (time series)

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[723.83 KB]

6: Fully engaged in employment or study, Table 16 (time series)

[!\[\]\(179f6b45bf59a6537d86a5664856855b_img.jpg\) Download XLSX](#)

[367.49 KB]

7: Fully engaged in employment or study (excluding school) by age, Table 17 (time series)

[!\[\]\(a7b41fb1134ffaedd465ed3a2efd9b2d_img.jpg\) Download XLSX](#)

[256.15 KB]

8: Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent, Table 18 (time series)

[!\[\]\(39f135ab0b8db67a0c053a15141ea204_img.jpg\) Download XLSX](#)

[269.09 KB]

9: Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent or Certificate II level or above, Table 19 (time series)

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[239.72 KB]

10: Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent or Certificate III level or above, Table 20 (time series)

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11: Highest educational attainment, Tables 21-23

[!\[\]\(89ee8c2eca6d64257942ed3f07401e57_img.jpg\) Download XLSX](#)

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12: Non-school qualifications, Table 24

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13: Non-school qualifications, Table 25 (time series)

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[230.64 KB]

14: Non-school qualifications by age by sex, Table 26 (time series)

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[103.83 KB]

15: With or studying towards a non-school qualification, Table 27 (time series)

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[336.73 KB]

16: Highest non-school qualification, Tables 28-32

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17: Highest non-school qualification: Certificate III level or above, Table 33 (time series)

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[583.56 KB]

18: Highest non-school qualification: Bachelor degree level or above, Table 34 (time series)

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[287.57 KB]

19: Highest non-school qualification: Bachelor degree level or above by age by sex, Table 35 (time series)

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[103.5 KB]

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[4.32 MB]

Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6227.0.

Post release changes

14/09/2022 - This release contains:

Data source information for Graphs 2 to 4 in the Engagement chapter was amended. A percentage estimate was corrected in the Current and Recent Study chapter, Studies in

STEM section. Some rounding errors in that section and other sections of the Current and Recent Study chapter were also corrected.

Methodology

[Education and Work, Australia methodology, May 2021](#)